

## SKAGIT/ISLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (SKAGIT/ISLAND RTPO)

The Skagit/Island RTPO consists of Skagit and Island Counties. The RTPO is the lead agency for regional transportation planning in accordance with the Growth Management Act.

Skagit and Island Counties cover 1,943 square miles. Skagit is situated in the northwestern part of Western Washington. It is bounded by Whatcom County to the north, Snohomish County to the south, and Island County to the southwest. The western third of the Skagit County includes a broad delta and flood plain, both of which extend through the fertile Skagit Valley. Running through the valley is the Skagit River flowing westward into Puget Sound toward the San Juan Islands. The heavily wooded Cascade Mountain Range dominates the eastern two-thirds of the county.



Looking at the southern tip of Camano Island from the Tulalip Reservation

The “island” in Island County refers to Whidbey and Camano Islands. Whidbey is 45 miles long, making it second largest island in the continental United States; only New York’s Long Island is bigger. The island provides 148 miles of coastline, a thriving arts community in the waterfront village of Langley, historic inns, wineries and farm stands, and several state parks with public beaches. Highway 525 and Highway 20 run the length of Whidbey all the way from the Clinton ferry dock at the south end of the island to Deception Pass State Park and the Deception Pass Bridge. The bridge connects Whidbey Island to the mainland at the north end via Fidalgo Island.

Camano Island is the other inhabited island in the county and lies between Whidbey and the mainland. The island takes its name from an early Spanish explorer. By the 1800s, Camano Island was a bustling community with mills, homes, schools, and with tall ships taking cargo from the deep waters at the north end of the island.

### *Major Facilities:*

Major roads that service the Skagit/Island RTPO area include I-5, SR 9, SR 20, the SR 20 Spur, SR 532, SR 525, and SR 538. Interstate 5 carries the highest volume of traffic in the region. SR 20 and the SR 20 Spur provide the only land access between Skagit and Island Counties. SR 532 connects Camano Island to the mainland.

There are approximately 161 miles of state owned and maintained highways within Skagit County, 54 miles of state owned and maintained highways within Island County, 800 miles of county roadway within Skagit County, and 600 miles of county roadway within Island County.

Non-Road Facilities:

- Ferry Service — Washington State Ferries (WSF) run from Anacortes to the San Juan Islands and on to Sidney, B.C. and Port Townsend to Keystone. WSF also provides service between Mukilteo and Clinton. Skagit County runs the Guemes Island Ferry.



Deception Pass Bridge looking west toward the Straits of Juan de Fuca

- Rail Transportation — Burlington Northern Santa Fe provides north-south rail access. Another railroad serving this region is the Mount Vernon Terminal Railroad. Two Amtrak daily round trips — The Seattle/Vancouver and the Seattle/Bellingham routes — serve the Mount Vernon Station. There are no railroad facilities in Island County.
- Marine Transportation — The Port of Anacortes operates a shipping terminal.
- Airport — Anacortes Municipal Airport, Skagit Regional Airport, Oak Harbor Airport, Whidbey Air Park, and Camano Air Park provide air service.

#### Demographics:

The population of the two-county RTPO was 174,537 in 2000. This represents 2.9 percent of the state's population. Since 1990 the population has grown 80 percent.

	Population (2000)	Persons Per Square Mile	Median Household Income (1997)
Washington State:	5,894,121	88.6	\$41,715
Island County:	71,558	344.0	\$41,294
Skagit County:	102,979	59.4	\$38,148

#### Skagit/Island RTPO Freight Facts:

- Mount Vernon is the largest generator of freight truck traffic within the Skagit/Island RTPO.
- Mount Vernon accounts for 2.8 % of truck trips originating in Whatcom, Skagit, Island, Snohomish, King and Kitsap Counties.

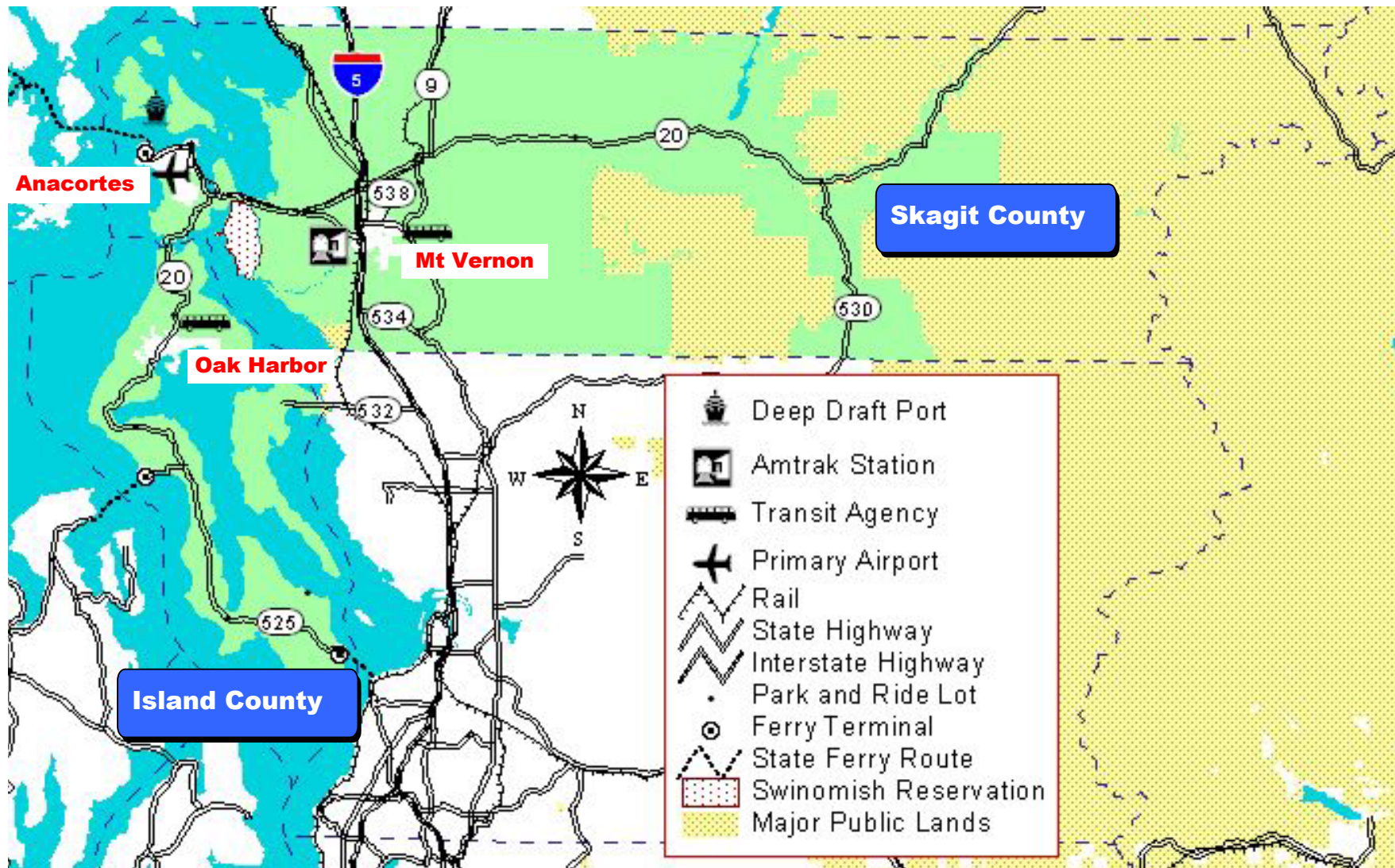
*Eastern Washington Intermodal Transportation Survey November 1995*

#### Freight Movement:

Agriculture and food processing, fishing, wood products, tourism, international trade, and specialized manufacturing make up the economy of Skagit County. Skagit County's accessible port and refineries make it the center of the state's petroleum industry. The national trend toward employment in retail trades and personal/professional services is visible in Skagit by the presence of malls and almost every national retail chain. The type of freight that is moved via rail is manufactured goods and merchandise, lumber and lumber products, and petrochemicals.

#### Economic Trends:

Island County's economy is based largely on Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, as well as a large retail sector, a fast growing services sector, and tourism. Island County has experienced slow economic development over the past 10 years.



### Transportation Priorities:

Transportation Options Development: There is an urgent need to expand Washington State

Ferries' capacity and associated parking, together with satellite parking and transit connections. The Washington State Ferries Systems Plan for 1999-2018 projects that the adopted 2-boat wait level of service standard for the Clinton/Mukilteo Ferry service will be exceeded in 2005. In order to keep up with anticipated travel demands, construction of a new Mukilteo multimodal terminal will be required. The new terminal constructed with two piers will allow three 130-car ferries to simultaneously operate at 20-minute intervals.



Clinton/Mukilteo Ferry approaches Clinton Ferry dock.

***Skagit/Island RTPO Needs  
Congestion Management projects:***

<b><i>State Highways</i></b>	<b><i>\$1094.8 million</i></b>
<b><i>Ferry</i></b>	<b><i>\$1,120.4 million</i></b>

The SR 20 and the Keystone/Port Townsend Ferry Route is a major transportation corridor from Northwest Washington and British Columbia to the Olympic National Park and Washington's coastal attractions. Two new 110-car shallow draft vessels are needed to support the growing demands on the Keystone/Port Townsend ferry route.

Deception Pass and SR 20: Whidbey Island's land connection to the mainland is State Route 20 over the Deception Pass Bridge at the extreme north end of Whidbey Island, then east through Skagit County. The fast-growing population on Whidbey Island; the presence of Whidbey Island Naval Air Station that provides 10,000 jobs; the presence of the Deception Pass State Park and SR 20's inclusion in the Cascade Loop all combine to create a serious transportation bottleneck on the Deception Pass Bridge and the road across Fidalgo Island. Consequently, bridge safety including structural and design needs, such as strength or sight distance, and bridge capacity needs, are important. Eventual replacement or additional capacity for the historic Deception Pass Bridge will be necessary.



Canoe Pass Bridge and Deception Pass Bridge  
looking southeast from Fidalgo Island

SR 20 Fredonia to Interstate 5: State Route 20 is becoming increasingly congested. The average number of vehicles traveling on SR 20 per day in 1990 ranged from 14,100 to 17,300, this is a 28 percent increase over 1987 counts.

<b><i>Skagit/Island RTPO Needs Congestion Management projects:</i></b>	
<b><i>State Interest Facilities</i></b>	
<b><i>Transportation Demand Management</i></b>	<b><i>\$36.9 million</i></b>
<b><i>Transit</i></b>	<b><i>\$7.0 million</i></b>

Traffic problems on this corridor include: increased intersection delays, interrupted traffic flows, and increased accident frequency. Unlimited access to the State Route contributes to increased congestion and accident rates. In addition, the SR 20/I-5 Interchange is not capable of efficiently moving existing traffic, and will deteriorate further if SR 20 is expanded.

The SR 20 Fredonia to Interstate 5 Project is planned to address these problems. Two improvements designed for this project are: 1) widening SR 20 between SR 536 and I-5 to 4 lanes; and 2) improving SR 20/I-5 interchange through signalization and realignment of ramps. Any changes to the existing State Route 20 must take the SR 20/I-5 Interchange into consideration.

Other Transportation Issues Include:

- Safety: SR 20 between SR 536 and Sharpe's Corner is a high accident corridor with many fatalities.
- Improving capacity and connectivity to the Ferry service between Anacortes and the San Juan Islands and Sidney, B.C. will support economic development in Anacortes and the San Juans.
- Capacity deficiencies on SR 20 between I-5 and Sedro-Woolley.
- Congestion in the SR 532 corridor — partially in Snohomish County — hinders travel on this sole link to Camano Island.
- Capacity constraints on the Skagit River Bridge affect efficient travel on I-5 between Mount Vernon and Burlington.
- Low clearance at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Bridge on I-5 inhibits freight mobility.

<b><i>Skagit/Island RTPO Needs Freight Movement projects:</i></b>	
<b><i>State Highways</i></b>	<b><i>\$287.9 million</i></b>
<b><i>Ferry</i></b>	<b><i>\$221.9 million</i></b>

<b>Members:</b>	<u>Counties:</u> <i>Island and Skagit;</i>
	<u>Cities:</u> <i>Anacortes, Burlington, Coupeville, La Conner, Langley, Mount Vernon, Oak Harbor, and Sedro-Woolley;</i>
	<u>Transit Agencies:</u> <i>Island Transit, and Skagit Transit;</i>
	<u>Ports:</u> <i>Port of Skagit County and Port of Anacortes;</i>
	<u>Tribal Nations:</u> <i>Swinomish;</i>
	<u>State Agency:</u> <i>WSDOT</i>

**Skagit/Island RTPO Transportation Facts:**

- Between 1970 and 1997 population grew 112%, while registered vehicles increased 185%.
- Between 1990 and 1997 population grew 21%, employment increased 20% and vehicle miles traveled went up 26%.
- Freight tonnage, primarily via truck transport, is projected to increase 27% by 2014.
- Island Transit currently has 32 vanpools in operation and plans to add 90 vans to its fleet.

<b>Increase in Ferry Ridership (1976 to 1992)</b>		
	<b>Mukilteo-Clinton Ferry</b>	<b>Keystone-Port Townsend Ferry</b>
Vehicle Usage on Ferries	Nearly 100%	Over 200%
Total Ridership on Ferries	85%	190%